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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to identify specific characteristics of students who avail themselves of the counseling services offered by the college psychological counseling clinic. The study was designed to provide relevant data concerning two important questions. First, is a specific psychological counseling service needed as part of the college program, i.e. does contact with the service indicate alleviation of behavioral symptoms which would impede a student's school performance? Secondly, are counselors in the psychological clinic dealing with different student problems than counselors in the counseling office? Analysis of a random sample of clinic records, including stated reason for coming and outcome of counseling, indicates that the service has been effective for alleviating symptoms which could interfere with successful adjustment, including school performance. Results also provide evidence to support the theory that students coming to the psychological clinic for assistance have stated problems different from those requesting assistance from the counseling office. (Author)

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STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS REVEALED THROUGH INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING SERVICES

JC 740 059

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Research Abstract

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The objective of this study was to identify specific characteristics of students who avail themselves of the counseling services offered by the college psychological counseling clinic. The study was designed to provide relevant data concerning two important questions. First, is a specific psychological counseling service needed as part of the college program, i.e. does contact with the service indicate alleviation of behavioral symptoms which would impede a students' school performance? Secondly, are counselors in the psychological clinic dealing with different student problems than counselors in the counseling office?

Analysis of a random sample of clinic records, including stated reason for coming and outcome of counseling, indicates that the service has been effective for alleviating symptoms which could interfere with successful adjustment, including school performance.

Results also provide evidence to support the theory that students coming to the psychological clinic for assistance have stated problems different from those requesting assis tance from the counseling office.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS REVEALED THROUGH INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING SERVICES

Los Angeles Pierce College has had an ongoing personal counseling service from 1968 to present. This service was established by the college President, at the request of student body leaders and in response to numerou student inquiries.

While other community colleges have initiated similar programs little has been done to evaluate their effectiveness or to assess the need for them as separate from the regular school counseling program. Most published surveys on counseling services deal with student characteristics, overall programs, counselor/client ratio, and counselor load as they relate to college procedures, career information and course advisement (1).

Therefore, the objective of this study was to identify specific characteristics of students who avail themselves of the counseling services offered by the college psychological counseling clinic. The study was designed to provide relevant data concerning two important questions; first, is a specific psychological counseling service needed as part of the college program, i.e. does contact with the service indicate alleviation of behavioral symptoms which would impede a students' successful adjustment, especially as it relates to his school performance? Second, are counselors in the psycho-

logical clinic dealing with different student problems than counselors in the counseling office? The theory that personal problems may adversely affect school performance has been previously well supported (2) (3).

PROCEDURE

In order to identify characteristics of students coming to the psychological clinic, it was necessary to collect identical data on each client. As each counselor maintained records in his own way, a standardized form was devised which included the sex of the client, his referral source, his stated symptoms, the diagnostic impression of the counselor, the number of times he was seen, and the outcome of counseling, as observed by the counselor. The five psychological counselors jointly participated in constructing the record. No names of students were used, to insure confidentiality.

A random sample of fifty students was selected from the clinic records of three consecutive semesters, including spring 1973. A random sample of one hundred fifty students was also selected from the counseling office interview records of the same three semesters. This was done to provide a comparison group on the relevant variable "reason for visit."

RESULTS

A summary of the results are presented in Table I and

Table II. Table I shows the stated problems and counseling records of students in the psychological clinic. Table II shows the counseling records of students in the counseling office sample.

There appears to be a difference between the clinic sample and the counseling office sample on the relevant variable "stated reason for coming."

Results in Table I show that all fifty members, (100%) of the clinic group stated that their "reasons for visit" were personal problems.

The problems presented by this group fell into eleven categories. The frequency distribution included a mode of fifteen (30%) for General Unhappiness, seven (14%) for lack of motivation, and six (12%) for 'Sex Related Problems. The frequency then dropped to four (8%) in the categories of Anxiety and Drug Use, three (6%) for Undesirable Habits and Learning Problems and two (4%) in the categories of Fatigue, Psychosomatic Complaints, Bizarre Behavior and Home Problems.

Results in Table II show that only five out of one hundred fifty, (3%) of the counseling office group stated that their "reasons for visit" were personal problems.

The problems presented by this group fell into five categories. The distribution was highly skewed with a mode of one hundred fourteen (76%) for Program Advisement--new

student, thirty one (20 2/3%) for Program Advisement--Information, and then dropped to three (2%) in the category of Poor Schoolwork, and one (2/3%) in the categories of Unhappy and Home Problems.

The results in Table II also appear to support the findings of Lagerstrom (4) that three percent of the students state that they would go to the counseling office for help with personal problems.

The number of clinic group students showing improvement was thirty six out of fifty or (70%). No "improvement" or "outcome" measure was available for the counseling office group.

DISCUSSION

In view of the data collected there appears to be little similarity between the two groups and little overlap in the categories of problems, as stated by the students.

The number of "clinic group" students showing improvement (70%) is considered to be quite high for this type of program and tends to support one of the original hypotheses that contact with the service does alleviate behavioral symptoms. However, no control group, consisting of students having self stated problems and receiving no service, was used. Therefore, no statistical analyses of this data was appropriate.

A limitation in comparing counseling office records

with clinic records is that counseling records are open to all certificated personnel, clinic records are not. Students discussing personal problems with counselors after or during their initial visits may not have been identified.

It may also be argued that a random sample of one hundred fifty, approximately one percent of the student day population, was not large enough to represent the counseling office group. However, one percent is generally considered to be adequate for this type of sample.

It is important to note that now that the characteristics of students coming to the psychological clinic have been empirically assessed, additional follow-up studies can be conducted on student progress, the adequacy of the program, effectiveness of implementation, need for expansion etc.

CONCLUSIONS

The data presented in this article do tend to support the conclusion that the psychological clinic personnel are dealing with students who have personal problems which would interfere with school progress and that contact with the clinic indicates allievation of these symptoms.

If this function is held to be important as part of a total educational program, then it can also be concluded that such a clinic is needed.

The results of this study also provide evidence to sup-

port the theory that students coming to the psychological clinic for assistance generally have problems of a different nature than those requesting assistance from the counseling office. However, the extent to which this is true has not been assessed.

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TABLE I

Presenting problems and counseling records of students coming to Psychological Clinic.

Client's stated reason for coming	N	Most frequent referral source	Avg. # of times seen	Number showing improvement	Number referred to outside agency
General unhappiness	15	self	6	12	3
Anxiety	4	self	8	3	2
Fatigue	2	nurse/self	4	2	0
Psychosomatic complaints	2	nurse	4	3	2
Drug use	4	self	3	1	3
Undesirable habits	3	self	7	2	1
Sex related problems	6	self	5	4	0
Lack of motivation	7	faculty/ self	6	4	0
Bizarre behavior	2	faculty/ nurse	10	1	2
Learning problems	3	faculty/ self	9	2	1
Home problems	2	self	7	2	0
Total	50		$\bar{x}$6.27	36	14

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TABLE II

Presenting problems and counseling records of students coming to counseling office.

Client's stated reason for coming	N	Most frequent referral source	Average* number times seen	Most frequent outcome
Program Advisement (new student)	114	school requirement	1	Advisement
Information - program advisement (returning student)	31	self	1	Advisement
Poor schoolwork	3	self	2	no record
Unhappy	1	self	1	no record
Home problems	1	self	1	no record
Total	150		$\bar{x}$=1.04	

*Rounded to nearest whole number.

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